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*Michael Hope*

## A FIRST DRAFT OF HISTORY: NASAWĪ'S *ACCOUNT OF THE TATARS* AND EARLY PERSIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE MONGOL EMPIRE

### INTRODUCTION

The last two decades have witnessed a revolution in the way historians view early Mongol historiography and its most important artifact, *The Secret History of the Mongols*. The text is the only surviving record of the Mongol Empire (1206–1388) written in Mongolian and is, therefore, a witness to both the rise of the empire and the development of written Mongolian. It was initially assumed that this text was the first product of the Mongolian high culture cultivated by Chinggis Khan and that it was completed shortly after his death by an anonymous author in 1228. Yet more recent research points to *The Secret History* being compiled during the reign of Möngke Khan (r. 1251–1259) from a range of earlier, now lost, genealogies, proclamations, and narrative accounts<sup>1</sup>. One of the most important sources for *The Secret History*, identified by Christopher Atwood, is the «Indictment of Ong Khan», which takes up approximately one-fifth of the entire work, and lists the grievances of the Mongols against the more established Kereyit and Naiman khanates<sup>2</sup>. The Indictment appears to have occupied

<sup>1</sup> *Bayarsaikhan D.* The Mongols and the Armenians (1220–1335). Leiden, 2011. P. 7–9; *Atwood C.* How the Secret History of the Mongols was Written // *Mongolica*. 2016. Vol. 49. P. 35–36. — For the earlier research on the origins and transmission of the text, see: *Hung W.* The Transmission of the Book Known as The Secret History of the Mongols // *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*. 1951. Vol. 14. No. 3. P. 433–492. — See also, *Bira Sh.* Mongolian Historical Writing from 1200 to 1700 / Trans. J. R. Krueger. Bellingham, 2002. P. 16–47; *Rachewiltz I. de.* 1) The Dating of the Secret History of the Mongols — A Re-Interpretation // *Ural-Altische Jahrbuecher*. 2008. No. 22. P. 150–184; 2) Some Remarks on the Dating of the Secret History of the Mongols // *Monumenta Serica*. 1965. No. 24. P. 205; *Waley A.* Notes on the “Yüan-ch’ao pi-shih” // *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*. 1960. Vol. 23. No. 3. P. 530.

<sup>2</sup> *Atwood C.* The Indictment of Ong Qa’an: The Earliest Reconstructable Mongolian Source on the Rise of Chinggis Khan // *Festschrift for Professor Futaki Hiroshi*. Historical and Philological

a central place in early Mongol historiography before being replaced by the more positive claims of Chinggis Khan and his family to rule the steppe. Evidence for this theory may strangely be found in the early histories of Mongol-ruled Iran, which drew upon written and oral narratives received from the Mongol court.

The *Account of the Accursed Tatars and the Beginning of their Rule and Their Place of Origin* (*dhikr al-tātār al-malā'īn wa mabda' amrahum wa mansha'hum*) by the Iranian official Shihāb al-Dīn Nasawī (d. 1250) is perhaps the most interesting and compelling of these early records. The *Account* appears in the biography (*sīrat*) of Nasawī's patron, Jalāl al-Dīn Mingubirtī, which he wrote in Syria in 1242–1243. The original text was composed in Arabic, but was abridged and translated into Persian by an anonymous author sometime in the thirteenth century. The Persian version may not have been read widely in Iran, but the Arabic was used by a number of later Mamluk historians, such as Abū Shāma (d. 1267), al-Nuwayrī (d. 1333), and al-Dhahabī (d. 1348), who considered the work of «the secretary» (*al-munshī*) Nasawī, alongside Ibn al-Athīr's *al-Kāmil fī'l-Tā'rīkh*, to be of primary importance in understanding the early history of the Mongols<sup>3</sup>. Nasawī had also read Ibn al-Athīr's work but believed his own chronicle to be of greater value on the recent history of Iran because he was a participant to the events he described. He compared himself to the sole survivor of a shipwreck, whose duty was to retell his story. Moreover, he professed to have unique information from China and the furthest parts of India, reported to him by eye-witnesses<sup>4</sup>.

In truth, Nasawī's account contains much less detail on the origins of Chinggis Khan and the rise of the Mongols than later historians writing from inside the Mongol Empire. Like many other early histories of the Mongols written in Arabic, Latin, Chinese, and Armenian, his *Account of the Tatars* has largely been ignored by modern historians because it does not accord with *The Secret History* or the other texts derived from it, namely the *Shengwu Qinzheng-lu* and Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh Hamadānī's (d. 1318) *Jām'ī al-Tawārīkh*. This «Secret History fundamentalism», as Atwood describes it, ignores the value that Nasawī, and authors like him, bring by showing how information spread in the Mongol Empire, both amongst the conquered population and among Mongol officials<sup>5</sup>. Indeed, one compelling reason to take Nasawī's *Account* seriously is that it contains many parallels with the other early Persian histories, such as the *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāsirī* (The Nasirian Tables) of Minhāj al-Dīn Jūzjānī, the *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā* (History of the World Conqueror) of 'Alā al-Dīn 'Aṭā Malik Juwaynī, and the recently published *Aḥwāl Mulūk al-Tatār al-Mughūl* (Condition

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Studies of China's Western Regions. 2017. No. 9. P. 272–306; Atwood C. The Secret History of the Mongols. Milton Keynes, 2023. P. lxxviii.

<sup>3</sup> *Abū Shāma*. Kitāb al-Rawḍatayn fī al-Akḥbār al-Dawlatayn al-Nūriyya wa al-Salaḥiyya / Ed. I. Shams al-Dīn. Vol. 1. Beirut, 2002. P. 154; *al-Nuwayrī*, *Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad*. Nihāyat al-arāb fī funūn al-ādab / Ed. N. M. Fawāz & H. K. Fawāz. Vol. 27. Beirut, 2004. P. 206, 226; *al-Dhahabī*, *Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad*. Ta'rīkh al-islām wa-wafayāt al-mashāhīr wa-l-a'lām / Ed. 'U. Tadmurī. Vol. 44. Beirut, 1999. P. 16, 23, 47. — Al-Nuwayrī borrowed sparingly from Nasawī, but also drew upon other sources, which renders his account very different to that of the original author, as noted by Lyall Armstrong: *Armstrong L*. The Making of a Sufi: al-Nuwayrī's Account of the Origin of Genghis Khan // *Mamluk Studies Review*. 2006. Vol. 10, No. 2. P. 153.

<sup>4</sup> *Nasawī*, *Shihāb al-Dīn Muḥammad*. Histoire du Sultan Djelal ed-Din Mankobirti Prince du Kharezme / Trans. O. Houdas. Paris, 1895. P. 4, 7.

<sup>5</sup> *Atwood C*. Six Pre-Chinggisid Genealogies in the Mongol Empire // *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi*. 2012. No. 19. P. 6.

of the Kings of the Tatar Mongols) of Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī al-Baṭṭī, all of which were written in 1260. Each of these histories appear to have drawn their information about the early Mongols from different sources, yet they all touch on similar themes and topics. The central story is, however, the contest between Chinggis Khan, the Kereyit and the Naiman, who served as «conduits for institutional memory», linking the Mongols to earlier empires and serving as «miniature prototypes» of the type of state that Chinggis Khan created.<sup>6</sup>

Nasawī’s *Account of the Tatars* should, therefore, not be considered an erroneous misconception of early Mongol history, but rather a relatively accurate reproduction of some of the earliest histories produced by the Mongols themselves. The present study will begin by giving an English translation of the *Account of the Tatars* before providing analysis, identifying the likely provenance of some of its information and situating it within the historiography of Mongol-ruled Iran (1231–1384).

### NASAWĪ’S ACCOUNT OF THE TATARS<sup>7</sup>

#### Account of the Accursed Tatars and the Beginning of their Rule and Their Place of Origin

More than one of those whose words are credible have told me that the kingdom of China (*mulk al-Šīn*) is a vast realm, six months journey in circumference, and it is said that it is surrounded by a wall [which is unbroken] except by steep mountains and wide rivers. And it has been divided since the ancient times into six portions, every part [stretching for] a month’s journey is ruled by a khan, which is a prince (*malik*) in their language, deputising for the supreme khan (*khānahum al-A‘zam*).

The great khan at the time of Sultan Muḥammad, Altūn Khan, inherited [his position] from eldest to eldest, or from disbeliever to disbeliever. It is their custom to reside in Ṭamghāj<sup>8</sup> — which is in China (*al-Šīn*) — and its surrounding area during the summer, moving from one summer camp to another, and going from one river bank to another, until winter showed its forbidding face. At that time, they cross the River Ganges (*Kank*) at the point where it drains into Kashmir (*Qashmīr*) to spend the winter along the bank. There is nothing to compare to its valleys and plateaus. At that time the six khans would remain in the land of China to guard what the king had left behind. Among the khans who lived at the aforesaid time was a person named Dūshī Khan, who married the paternal aunt of the accursed Chinggis (Jangiz) Khan. The people (*qabīla*) of this accursed one were known as the Tamarjī. [They] inhabited the deserts

<sup>6</sup> Atwood C. *Secret History*... P. xxviii.

<sup>7</sup> The following translation is based upon Ḥāfīz Aḥmad Ḥamdī’s publication of the Arabic MS Contained in the Bibliothèque Nationale of Paris, published in 1953 (p. 38–45). The MS was first discovered and translated into French by Octave Houdas in 1895 under the title *Histoire du Sultan Djelal ed-Din Mankobirti Prince du Kharezem*. Z. M. Bunyatov also produced a Russian translation, along with the Arabic MS and commentary, in 1996 (I am indebted to Dr. F. Veselov for bringing this translation to my attention). I have consulted and compared all three texts for my own translation as well as Mujtabba Mīnuwī’s translation of the Persian MS held in Istanbul.

<sup>8</sup> The term *Ṭamghāj* was derived from the name of the chief clan of the Northern Wei, the Toba, who ruled over northern China. The term also incorporated the eastern Inner Asian steppe. See: *Biran M. The Empire of the Qara Khitai in Eurasian History: Between China and the Islamic World*. Cambridge, 2008. P. 98. — It becomes clear below that Nasawī believed Ṭamghāj to be a city.

and their winter camp was a place called Arghūn<sup>9</sup> and they were famous among the Turkic nations (*tawā'if al-Turk*) for evil and treachery, so that the rulers of China could not bring them to heel because of their instability. Now it happened that Dūshī Khan, the husband of the paternal aunt of the bloodthirsty Chinggis Khan, died at the time when Altūn Khan was away. Chinggis Khan went to visit his aunt to pass on his condolences. Dūshī Khan's widow immediately sent the news of her husband's death to Kūshlū Khan and Chinggis Khan, who governed the two territories bordering that of the deceased, informing them that her husband had left no sons to succeed him and she proposed that, if they put her nephew, Chinggis Khan, in his place, he would follow the deceased in supporting them and bending to their will. The two khans approved the widow's suggestion and urged her to put her nephew in power in order to fill the void left by Dūshī Khan's death and guaranteed that they would maintain this situation once Altūn Khan returned to the seat of power. Chinggis Khan governed what belonged to Dūshī Khan and, in a short time, he was joined by the most evil and mischievous of his race, whose fire for discord was never extinguished and whose swords were never dull. When Altūn Khan returned to his city, known as Ṭamghāj, he summoned the chamberlains, as was the custom, and every day they explained to him the affairs that had taken place during his absence. When he was presented with the gifts of Chinggis Khan (the nephew of Dūshī), he became violently angry, being greatly surprised that the two khans had dared to make this appointment. He immediately ordered that the tails of the horses carrying the gifts be cut off and that they [the khans] be sent away. The chamberlains then emerged, insulted Chinggis Khan and reproached the other two khans for their conduct. The threats were so strong that Chinggis Khan and his two companions judged they would soon be killed and that the danger was closer to them than their veins. They immediately unshackled their hands from the bonds of loyalty and all three abandoned their accord [lit. the collective word of the majority].

#### **Account of what happened to Chinggis Khan and his two Allies following their revolt**

When they broke violently from their lord, they swore to lend each other assistance and kept the promises they had made to each other. They raised the standard of revolt, drew evil from its sheath, and Chinggis Khan (the nephew of Dūshī) summoned his companions to his aid. To try to bring them back to obedience, Altūn Khan repeatedly sent them messages in which he mixed manipulation and intimidation, promises and threats. This call only excited their desire for separation. Every time they were summoned, they covered their ears and clothed themselves in arrogance, testifying to the persistence of their designs. Despairing of the success of his attempts at conciliation, Altūn Khan decided to use force and gathered men and weapons. But they met and dealt him an ugly defeat, and they slew the Jurchā-Khitāy<sup>10</sup> and there was [also] a mass slaughter among the various Turkic people of his army. Altūn Khan managed to flee with a small number of his soldiers who escaped the blades, beyond the Ganges, vacating the country to them (the allies), who occupied and took control of it. Their army swelled with the Turks, people without faith, greedy for the property of others and eager

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<sup>9</sup> The valley of *Ergune-qun* (*Irganah-qūn*) is described by Rashīd al-Dīn as being surrounded by thick forests and high mountains. The Mongol progenitors, Nukuz, Qiyān, and their wives, sought sanctuary from their enemies in Ergune-qun and procreated until they grew too numerous and left to populate Mongolia. See *Rashīd al-Dīn Faḡl Allāh Hamadānī*. Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh / Ed. M. Rawshan, M. Mūsawī. Vol. 1. Tehran, 1998. P. 145.

<sup>10</sup> i.e. Jurchens and Khitans.

to enrich themselves. As Altūn Khan's affairs continued to deteriorate, his troops disbanded and his prestige weakened more and more, so he requested peace. He accepted what had happened and contained himself in the miserable territory which still recognised his authority, thus giving much to keep little. They accepted his requests and continued to rule together until the death of Chinggis Khan (one of the two khans that appointed Dūshī's nephew). At that moment, the others remained masters of the empire and held the reins [of power] together. When they were safe from Altūn Khan, they (the allies) went to Balāsāqūn and seized control of it as well as the surrounding countryside. At that moment Kushlū Khan died and his son took his place and his title was [also] Kushlū Khan. His youth and age caused Chinggis Khan to hold him in disdain and he wanted to abandon the pact between him and his father and, following recriminations on both sides, a break was reached. Kushlū Khan separated from his ally as soon as their words got heated and the discussion became too intense.

### PROVENANCE AND ANALYSIS OF THE TEXT

At first glance, Nasawī's *Account of the Tatars* appears to be at odds with the narrative of *The Secret History of the Mongols*. Many of the names are unfamiliar and the sequence of events is out of order. We know, for instance, that Chinggis Khan unified the Mongols under his leadership in 1206, well-before he went to war with the Jin emperor (Altūn Khan) of northern China in 1211. Moreover, it is clear that Altūn Khan did not winter in Kashmir, or anywhere near the Gangetic plains. These glaring discrepancies would appear to discredit Nasawī's claim to possess unique knowledge from eye-witness accounts, yet there are elements of the text that give his assertions the ring of authenticity.

Nasawī did not explicitly identify his source for Chinggis Khan's rise to power, but it does seem likely that his informant was close to the Mongol Empire, possibly a former subject of the Qara Khitai. This possibility is suggested by the heavy use of Sino-Turkic titles to describe the early Mongol rulers. The confusion this caused later historians, who struggled to identify some of the main characters in the *Account of the Tatars*, is mentioned by Hodous<sup>11</sup>. The identity of Kushlū Khan and Dūshī Khan are especially problematic, as they are vital for understanding the text. Neither of these individuals are mentioned in *The Secret History of the Mongols*. Yet their absence is due to the fact that Kushlū and Dūshī were not names, but titles given by the Khitai to their nomadic subjects in the Mongolian Plateau. The Turco-Mongolian nomads of Chinggis Khan's time went by many titles, due to their contact with neighbours in the west and the south. For instance, Rashīd al-Dīn notes that the Naiman rulers were known as «*buyruk*» (commander), a word they borrowed from the neighbouring Uyghurs, in addition to the Chinese title of *tai wang* (great king), which was afforded to them both by the Khitan Liao dynasty (916–1125) and by their successors, the Jurchen Jin (1125–1234), who replaced the Khitai in northern China<sup>12</sup>. The Turkic title *güchlü* (powerful) was also adopted by the Turkic-speaking Naiman and was used by *The Secret History* to refer to the son and heir of the last Naiman ruler, Tayang Khan (i.e. *tai wang khan*). The Kushlū Khans referenced

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<sup>11</sup> *Nasawī. Histoire... P. 9.*

<sup>12</sup> *Togan Ī. Flexibility and Limitation in Steppe Formations: The Kerait Khanate and Chinggis Khan. Leiden, 1998. P. 66; Munkh-Erdene L. Political Order in Pre-Modern Eurasia: Imperial Incorporation and the Hereditary Division System // Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society. 2016. Vol. 26, No. 4. P. 647; Rashīd al-Dīn. Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh... Vol. 1. P. 126.*

by Nasawī are therefore almost certainly the Naiman ruler Tayang (r. ?–1204) and his son, Gūchūlūg (d. 1218).

*Güchlū* was not the only Turkic title that Nasawī used to identify Chinggis Khan and his contemporaries. He also referred to the ruler whom Chinggis Khan replaced as «Dūshī», a rough approximation to the Chinese title of *tai-shi* (prince). This term was used widely for minor functionaries, including a Khitan official who acted as overseer (*darughachi*) of Mongol-ruled Bukhara after that city was captured in 1220<sup>13</sup>. The word *dūshī* was frequently encountered by Persian historians of the early Mongol Empire and was also used by Juwaynī in reference to a tax official of the Qara Khitai, sent to collect tribute from the Muslim oasis towns of East Turkistan and Transoxiana prior to the Mongol invasion<sup>14</sup>. The title also appears in the genealogy of Chinggis Khan's ancestors, namely the Nīru'ūn lineage mentioned by Rashīd al-Dīn. Indeed, the leading family of this lineage — the Tayichi'ut — were most likely named for the fact that they held the title of *tai-shi*<sup>15</sup>. The ruler of this lineage at the time that Chinggis Khan was born was Qada'an Taishi. Rashīd al-Dīn stated that this Qada'an Taishi was the *quda* (in-law) of Chinggis Khan's grandfather Bartan Ba'atur<sup>16</sup>. While there is no record of Chinggis Khan's aunt playing a significant role in his rise to the leadership of the Mongols in *The Secret History*, his mother Lady Ö'elün did exercise considerable influence over her son and it is possible that the two women were conflated in his account. It should, however, also be noted that the name «Jochi» was frequently given to children of the Qiyat lineage and was often glossed as Dūshī in the Persian sources. For instance, Nasawī listed Chinggis Khan's son Jochi as «Dūshī» and even Juwaynī refers to him as «Tūshī»<sup>17</sup>. Yet Rashīd al-Dīn makes no such mistake and the genealogical information he presented, along with the positive identification of Qada'an Taishi as the leader of the Nīru'ūn, make him the most likely candidate for Nasawī's Dūshī Khan. The use of such Chinese titles to identify the leaders of Mongolia affirm Nasawī's claim that he was referencing someone with reliable information about the early Mongols.

Nasawī's *Account of the Tatars* even suggests that the title «Chinggis» was already in use prior to Chinggis Khan's appearance. This supposition is confirmed by Rashīd al-Dīn, who claimed that Chinggis was a form of exultation, which he compared to the Persian «*shahanshāh*» (emperor) and the Khitan «*gür khan*» (universal ruler)<sup>18</sup>. The identity of the original Chinggis Khan is not indicated by Nasawī, but the most likely candidate is clearly To'oril Khan of the Kereyit, who also held the title of «king» (*wang*) from Altūn Khan in the *Secret History*. Indeed, the author of the *Secret History* confirms the other key aspect of Nasawī's story, by stating that Chinggis Khan (then known as Temüjin) was nominated to rule

<sup>13</sup> Buell P. Sino-Khitan Administration in Mongol Bukhara // *Journal of Asian History*. 1979. Vol. 13. No 2. P. 122.

<sup>14</sup> Buell P. Sino-Khitan Administration... P. 122.

<sup>15</sup> Poppe N. On Some Proper Names in the Secret History // *Ural-Altische Jahrb.* 1975. Vol. 47. P. 165. See: *The Secret History of the Mongols: A Mongolian Epic Chronicle of the Thirteenth Century* / Trans. I. de Rachewiltz. Leiden, 2006. P. 286 for an overview of the relevant literature.

<sup>16</sup> *Rashīd al-Dīn. Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh...* Vol. 1. P. 187. Rashīd al-Dīn initially refers to him solely by the title “*Tā'īshī*.”

<sup>17</sup> *Nasawī, Shihāb al-Dīn Muḥammad. Sīrat-i Jalāl al-Dīn Mīnkubirtī* / Ed. Ḥ. A. Ḥamdī. Cairo, 1953. P. 46.

<sup>18</sup> *Rashīd al-Dīn. Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh...* Vol. 1. P. 571.

the Nīru'ūn lineage after he had joined the service of To'oril Khan. In fact, the Kereyit ruler confirmed Chinggis Khan's appointment, telling the Mongols «To make my son Temūjin *qan* is indeed right. How can the Mongols be without a *qan*?»<sup>19</sup> Not only did To'oril fulfil the role of kingmaker, he was also the only other leader on the steppe with the kind of power to do so. Juwaynī noted that «In those days Ong Khan (i.e. To'oril) the ruler of the Kereyit and the Sāqīz (Sāqiyat) surpassed the other tribes in strength and dignity and was stronger than them in gear and equipment and in the number of his men»<sup>20</sup>. To'oril therefore seems to have fulfilled Nasawī's description. Yet why would Nasawī give To'oril Khan the same title as Chinggis?

It is entirely possible that, like the Naiman, the Kereyit ruler was known by several titles and that «*chinggis*» was one of them. There is no evidence to support this claim, but it does seem, as Lhamsuren Munkh-Erdene has suggested, that the Mongols, Naiman, Jadaran, and even To'oril's relatives were all competing for control of the Kereyit throne<sup>21</sup>. Their pastures on the Orkhon Valley had been the centre of the earlier Göktürk (552–745) and Uyghur (745–840) empires and no doubt brought additional gravitas for any ruler who could control them. Hence, as Marie Favereau recently pointed out, Chinggis Khan announced «I have attained a high throne», after defeating To'oril in 1203<sup>22</sup>. Indeed, it has been suggested that the defeat of the Kereyit should be taken as the true founding date of the Mongol State and not the *quriltai* held in 1206, when he was given the title of «Chinggis»<sup>23</sup>. Chinggis Khan certainly attempted to ingratiate himself with the Kereyit leadership prior to that point, requesting that his son Jochi be given in marriage to To'oril's granddaughter. To'oril's son Senggam clearly understood this request to be a threat to his succession and prompted his father to break with Chinggis Khan, thereby bringing about his own family's decline at the hands of the rising star<sup>24</sup>. *The Secret History* also emphasised the idea that To'oril was Chinggis Khan's sworn father and that he therefore had a claim to the Kereyit leader's affections, if not his throne. The betrayal of this claim lay at the heart of the Indictment of Ong Khan. Yet even after defeating To'oril, Chinggis had three Kereyit princesses married to himself, his eldest son Jochi, and his youngest son Tolui, thereby combining the Kereyit royal line and his own<sup>25</sup>. It would then make sense for

<sup>19</sup> Secret History... P. 52; § 126.

<sup>20</sup> *Juwaynī, 'Alā al-Dīn 'Aṭā Malik. Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā* / Ed. M. Qazwīnī. Vol. 1. Leiden, 1912. P. 26. — Boyle's English translation has «Sāqiyat», based upon Pelliot's belief that the original MS mistranslated the Sāqiyat subgroup listed under the Kereyit by Rashīd al-Dīn. Blochet had initially suggested that Sāqīz was a Persian transliteration of the Turkish «*sekiz*» (eight), which is the meaning of «*naiman*» in Mongolian. Indeed, Juwaynī referred to the Naiman by name in other parts of the text, which raises the question of why he would have alternated to the Turkish *sekiz* here. I have, however, kept true to Qazwīnī's original transliteration. For Boyle's notes, see: *The History of the World Conqueror* / Trans. J. A. Boyle. Vol. 1. Manchester, 1958. P. 35. — See also: *Pelliot P., Hambis L. Histoire des Campagnes de Gengis Khan*. Leiden, 1951. P. 220.

<sup>21</sup> *Munkh-Erdene L. Where did the Mongol Empire Come From? Medieval Mongol Ideas of People, State and Empire* // *Inner Asia*. 2011. Vol. 13. No 2. P. 227.

<sup>22</sup> *Favereau M. The Horde: How the Mongols Changes the World*. Cambridge, MA, 2021. P. 35.

<sup>23</sup> *Munkh-Erdene L. The Rise of the Chinggisid Dynasty: Pre-Modern Eurasian Political Order and Culture at a Glance* // *International Journal of Asian Studies*. 2008. Vol. 15. No. 1. P. 63.

<sup>24</sup> *Dunnell R. Chinggis Khan: World Conqueror*. Boston, 2010. P. 42.

<sup>25</sup> *De Nicola B. The Economic Role of Mongol Women: Continuity and Transformation from Mongolia to Iran* // *The Mongols' Middle East: Continuity and Transformation in Ilkhanid Iran*.

Chinggis Khan to assume the titles and honours that had belonged to the previous ruler of the Orkhon Valley, as Nasawī suggests.

There is no evidence that the Naiman played a role in confirming Chinggis Khan as leader of the Mongols, or even that they acquiesced in his control of the former Kereyit territory. To'oril and the Naiman were on bad terms, as the Naiman supported the claims of his uncle Gür-Khan (not to be confused with the Qara Khitai Gür Khan of Nasawī), who was born to a Naiman princess. This challenge resulted in To'oril briefly being deposed as the leader of the Kereyit and caused him to join with Chinggis to lead a raid on the Naiman in 1198–1199<sup>26</sup>. Nasawī's source appears to have been unaware of this animosity, which goes unmentioned in his *Account*. He dates the hostility between Chinggis Khan and the Naiman to the period after Güchülüg Khan (the second Kushlū Khan) assumed the leadership of his people in 1204. Yet this change of leadership was also caused by Chinggis Khan, who defeated Tayang Khan at the battle of Chakirma'ut in the same year<sup>27</sup>. His son Güchülüg, who withdrew from the battle without a fight, moved west to the Irtys River, where he was joined by one of his father's old allies, the Merkit. This move is mentioned by Nasawī, but not the fact that Chinggis Khan sent a detachment to dislodge them in 1209, forcing Güchülüg to seek sanctuary with the Qara Khitai<sup>28</sup>. The absence of this information suggests a gap in Nasawī's information.

It seems likely that Nasawī relied upon two separate sources for his *Account of the Tatars* and Güchülüg's activities in the Qara Khitai empire (1209–1216), which I have not translated. Indeed, Güchülüg's takeover of the Qara Khitai territories was already known to Islamic authors and was reported in Ibn al-Athīr's *al-Kāmil fī'l-Tā'rīkh* in 1231<sup>29</sup>. Nasawī had read Ibn al-Athīr's account, but he added a great deal more detail through his connections in the Khwārazmshāh court. He informs us that one of these connections was the last envoy sent by Sultan Muḥammad to the Qara Khitai, Amīr Muḥammad b. Qarā Qāsim al-Nasawī<sup>30</sup>. In fact, Nasawī noted that Amīr Muḥammad «told me» of his incarceration at the hands of Güchülüg, due to “the harsh words which he used” to deliver his message «in accordance with the instructions of his master»<sup>31</sup>. Yet Amīr Muḥammad was just one of many officials moving between the court of Güchülüg and Sultan Muḥammad. The imperial secretary, Tāj al-Dīn Jāmī, informed the later historian Minhāj al-Dīn Jūzjānī that Sultan Muḥammad was constantly making inquiries about Chīn (China) and the extreme limits of Turkistan from visitors to his territory as he planned to conquer those regions<sup>32</sup>. Jūzjānī also claimed to have picked up information about the Mongol war with Altūn Khan from an envoy, Bahā al-Dīn Rāzī, whom

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Leiden, 2016. P. 81; *Broadbridge A.* Women and the Making of the Mongol Empire. Cambridge, 2018. P. 80–83.

<sup>26</sup> *Togan Ī.* Flexibility and Limitation... P. 93; *Dunnell R.* Chinggis Khan... P. 38.

<sup>27</sup> *May T.* The Mongol Art of War: Chinggis Khan and the Mongol Military System. Barnsley, 2007. P. 127–128; *May T.* The Conquest of Qara Khitai and Western Siberia // *The Mongol World*. London, 2022. P. 138.

<sup>28</sup> *May T.* Mongol Art of War... P. 15; Nasawī/Ḥamdī, *Sīrat*. P. 43.

<sup>29</sup> *al-Athīr*, 'Izz al-Dīn ibn. *al-Kāmil fī'l-Tā'rīkh* / Ed. C. J. Tornberg. Vol. 12. Leiden, 1853. P. 237.

<sup>30</sup> *Nasawī*. *Sīrat-i Jalāl al-Dīn Mīnkubirtī*... P. 45.

<sup>31</sup> *Nasawī*. *Sīrat-i Jalāl al-Dīn Mīnkubirtī*... P. 45.

<sup>32</sup> *Jūzjānī*, *Minhāj al-Dīn*. *Ṭabaqāt-i Nāshirī* / Ed. A. H. Ḥabībī. Vol. 2. Kabul, 1964. P. 102.

Sultan Muḥammad had dispatched to the Mongols during their invasion of northern China<sup>33</sup>. ‘Alā al-Dīn Juwaynī, who wrote at the same time as Jūzjānī, likewise, inserted the stories of Muslims who lived under Qara Khitai rule, including the *Account of the Martyr Imam ‘Alā al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Khutani*, which identified the apparent religious persecution suffered by the Muslim population of East Turkistan during Gūchūlūg’s reign as Gür Khan of the Qara Khitai<sup>34</sup>. How Juwaynī acquired this account is not clear, but it does appear that the Muslim world was already well-aware of Gūchūlūg’s arrival in the Gür Khan’s court, so Nasawī did not need his earlier informant for information about the last years of Naiman rule. The gap between Chinggis Khan’s rise to power and Gūchūlūg’s seizure of the Qara Khitai Empire, may explain some of the chronological and factual inconsistencies in his history.

Further evidence that Nasawī was drawing from two separate sources is provided by the fact that his *Account of the Tatars* reappears in the later *Humāyūn-nāmah* of Ḥakīm Zajjājī. Writing in the second half of the thirteenth century, during the vizierate of Shams al-Dīn Juwaynī (1261–1283), Zajjājī reproduced Nasawī’s *Account of the Tatars* in Persian verse form<sup>35</sup>. It is unclear whether Zajjājī, who rarely cited his sources, was working from the anonymous Persian translation, which he could have conceivably produced himself, or whether he was using the original Arabic. In any case, the *Humāyūn-nāmah* reproduces the basic narrative of Nasawī’s *Account* until the war with Altūn Khan<sup>36</sup>. No further information is provided by Zajjājī regarding Gūchūlūg’s seizure of power in the Qara Khitai Empire, nor his subsequent conflict with Sultan Muḥammad, suggesting that his original source ended here. It should, however, also be noted that Zajjājī also chose to omit the references to Kushlū Khan and the original Chinggis Khan, choosing instead to give Chinggis Khan’s aunt all the credit for appointing him in the place of her deceased husband, Dūshī Khan<sup>37</sup>. While it is clear that Zajjājī took editorial license in omitting certain sections of the text that he found inconsistent with the new state of knowledge in Mongol-ruled Tabriz, it is also clear that he remained faithful to the core narrative of Nasawī. But where did this narrative come from?

The use of the Sino-Turkish titles to identify the nomadic rulers of eastern Inner Asia suggests that his informant viewed the early Mongols through the lens of the appointments given to them by the Qara Khitai, and was likely one of their subjects. The probability that Nasawī’s informant was from the Qara Khitai Empire is also more likely given the large number of Khitai officials who found their way into the Khwārazmshāh Empire and the early Mongol administration of Iran shortly before Nasawī wrote his history. They included the senior commander, Tāyangū of Taraz, and the chamberlains, Barāq and Khamīd-būr, who had been sent to Khwārazm as envoys, but had been refused permission to return, shortly before Chinggis Khan’s invasion in 1219<sup>38</sup>. Barāq changed his loyalties and entered the service

<sup>33</sup> *Jūzjānī*. Ṭabaqāt-i Nāṣirī... Vol. 2. P. 102.

<sup>34</sup> *Juwaynī*, Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā... Vol. 1. P. 53–54.

<sup>35</sup> For the *Humāyūn-nāmah* of Ḥakīm Zajjājī see *al-Ḥay A. Tārīkh-i Manzūm Zajjājī // Yaghmā*. 1952. Vol. 5, No. 12. P. 554–559; *Alī Ābād J.R.* and *‘Abbāsī J.* *Humāyūn-nāmah: Tārīkh-i Manzūm-i Zajjājī // Justār-ha Ādabī*. 2014. Vol. 187. P. 39–58; *Aydinlū S.* *Humāyūn-nāmah Zajjājī wa Shāh-nāmah // Matn-Shināsī Ādab-i Fārsī*. 2014. Vol. 4. P. 1–38.

<sup>36</sup> *Zajjājī, Ḥakīm*. Tārīkh-i Manzūm-i Ḥakīm Zajjājī / Ed. ‘A. Pīrniyā. Vols. 1–2. Tehran, 2004. P. 938–940.

<sup>37</sup> *Zajjājī*. Tārīkh-i Manzūm... P. 938.

<sup>38</sup> *Juwaynī*, *‘Alā al-Dīn ‘Aṭā Malik*. Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā / Ed. M. Wahnāb Qazwīnī. Vol. 2. Leiden, 1916. P. 211; *Biran M.* *Empire of the Qara Khitai*... P. 87.

of Sultan Muḥammad, who sent him to Iran to serve in the household of prince Ghiyāth al-Dīn Pīrshāh. Baraq absconding to seize control of Kirman when the Mongol invasion began, suggesting that his fealty to the Khwārazmshāh was only superficial. He was joined by Tāj al-Dīn Bilgā Khan of Otrar, who was supposedly the first person to voluntarily defect from the Qara Khitai and was still alive in 1219 when Chinggis Khan's forces arrived<sup>39</sup>. There is no evidence that any of the people mentioned were responsible for transmitting *The Account of the Tatars*, but there were undoubtedly many more Khitans who had entered the service of the Khwārazmshāh and could have passed the information on.

It is, however, just as likely that Nasawī received his information from a Khitan who had entered Mongol service in Iran. The Qara Khitai and their subjects were, for the most part, absorbed into the Mongol Empire without bloodshed. Biran believes that Gür Khan's authority was already eroding before Gūchūlūg usurped his power and provincial vassals and commanders had nothing to gain from protecting him<sup>40</sup>. Indeed, the vassal rulers of Qayaliq, Özgand, and Qocho all submitted voluntarily to Chinggis Khan and were promised Mongol princesses in marriage<sup>41</sup>. They had nothing to fear from the khan so long as they provided military support and tribute to aid in his wars against the Khwārazmshāh and the Altūn Khan. Meanwhile, the bureaucratic apparatus of the Qara Khitai simply transferred its loyalty to the Mongols and were given senior positions in the chancellery of the new Mongol Empire. The first Mongol governor of Khwārazm, Chinqai, was a Khitan, as was the chief minister of Chinggis Khan's second son, Chaghadai, appropriately known simply as «Vizier». Rashīd al-Dīn notes that Vizier recorded everything that he saw and heard at court, to the extent that he could recite the wise sayings (*biligs*) of Chinggis Khan more faithfully than the Mongols themselves<sup>42</sup>. The intimate contact between the former Qara Khitai officials and the Mongols would have given them ample opportunity to learn about the history of their new overlords before reporting it to Nasawī who was chased out of Iran in 1231.

#### NASAWĪ'S ACCOUNT OF THE TATARS IN PERSIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

Although Nasawī would go on to exercise a heavy influence on the Mamluk histories of the Mongol Empire, he was used more sparingly among his contemporaries in Iran. With the exception of Zajjājī, there are few signs that Nasawī's *Account of the Tatars* was consulted by Persian writers in the middle of the thirteenth century. Never the less, Nasawī's narrative shares a great deal in common with other early histories of the Mongol Empire written in Iran. Each of their narratives revolve around the struggle between the Mongols, the Kereyit and the Naiman for power over eastern Inner Asia. Like Nasawī, the authors of these histories

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<sup>39</sup> *Nasawī. Sīrat-i Jalāl al-Dīn Mīnkubirtī...* P. 66.

<sup>40</sup> *Biran M. Empire of the Qara Khitai...* P. 74.

<sup>41</sup> *May T. The Mongol Empire.* Edinburgh, 2018. P. 45.

<sup>42</sup> *Hope M. Power, Politics, and Tradition in the Mongol Empire and the Īlkhānate of Iran.* Oxford, 2016. P. 48. See also: *Allsen T.T. Technologies of Governance in the Mongolian Empire: A Geographic Overview // Imperial Statecraft: Political Forms and Techniques of Governance in Inner Asia, Sixth-Twentieth Centuries.* Cambridge, 2006. P. 120; *Lane G. Genghis Khan and Mongol Rule.* Westport, 2004. P. 41; *Morgan D. Who Ran the Mongol Empire? // The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland.* 1982. No. 1. P. 128; *Ostrowski D. The Tamma and the Dual-Administrative Structure of the Mongol Empire // Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.* 1998. Vol. 61, No. 2. P. 276.

relied upon what “trustworthy persons related” from the Mongol court, to build a history of the Mongols. The consonance of these sources with the earlier *Account of the Tatars* again reinforces the view that Nasawī provided an accurate reproduction of some of the narratives common among the Mongols in the two decades after Chinggis Khan’s death in 1227.

The Naiman were the main competitors to the Mongols in the *Aḥwāl Mulūk al-Tatār al-Mughūl* of Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī al-Baṭīṭī who did not mention the Kereyit in any great detail. Writing from Mazandaran in 658/1260, Baṭīṭī provided a much more specific source for his information than Nasawī, namely Amīn al-Dīn Muḥammad Astarābādī. Little is known about Astarābādī, aside from the fact that he was a “very dear” acquaintance of Baṭīṭī, yet he claimed to have derived his knowledge of the Mongols from Muḥammad al-Khaffāf, who had journeyed to Qaraqorum and had received his information from a senior chieftain (*shaykh*) of the Mongols, who was «one of the close companions of the family of Chinggis Khan (*Āl-i Janqiz Khān*) and was knowledgeable of their condition in Qaraqorum»<sup>43</sup>. Khaffāf claimed that the Mongols were ruled by the Naiman, who «passed all limits in oppressing the people of Chinggis Khan» and would take their people away as slaves<sup>44</sup>. The people of Chinggis Khan, «the Tatar Mongols» (*al-Tātār al-Amghala*), banded together to appoint a leader to defend them against the Naiman. «Chinggis the Blacksmith» (*Janqiz al-ḥaddād*) was nominated for his wisdom and vision. He agreed to the appointment, on the condition that they follow his laws (*yāsātī*) and commands without hesitation and refrain from bad habits such as thieving and womanising. He then waited until the Naiman were away fighting the Qipchaqs and launched a sudden ambush on their camp, looting their women, children, treasure, and servants. When the Naiman returned, Chinggis Khan took sanctuary in high mountains and preyed on them like a hawk, forcing them to flee or be killed. From that moment, the Tatar Mongols were no longer belittled or impoverished, but became powerful in their own right.

There is little in Baṭīṭī’s story that overlaps with the earlier account of Nasawī, aside from the emphasis on the competition between the Naiman and the Mongols. The Naimans’ injustice and their exploitation of the otherwise poor and helpless Mongols may indeed reflect «The Indictment of Ong Khan», which contained an extensive discussion of their haughtiness and aggression towards the Mongols<sup>45</sup>. Yet other similarities are only minor. The reference to Chinggis Khan as a blacksmith is repeated by the Mamluk historian al-Nuwayrī and appears to be taken from Nasawī’s reference to Chinggis Khan’s tribe as the «Tamarjī» — *demirci* being Turkish for «blacksmith»<sup>46</sup>. The more likely explanation is that both sources mistranslated Chinggis Khan’s personal name, Temüjin, as blacksmith. The reference to Chinggis Khan taking up a defensive position in the mountains most likely references the Battle of Chakirma’ut, which passes without mention in the account of Nasawī, so too the *yasa* of Chinggis Khan, which was referenced by other contemporaneous writers, but not Nasawī.

Minhāj al-Dīn Jūzjānī’s account comes much closer to that of Nasawī, although his sources are not known. Rather, relying on the word of «trustworthy persons», he claimed that Mongolia was dominated by two rulers, To’oril and another unnamed prince, who were subject

<sup>43</sup> *Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī al-Baṭīṭī. Aḥwāl Mulūk al-Tatār al-Mughūl: Risālah dar Aḥwāl Mughūlān va Suqūt-i Baghdād* / Ed. R. Ja’fariyān. Qum, 2015. P. 65.

<sup>44</sup> *Baṭīṭī. Aḥwāl Mulūk al-Tatār...* P. 66.

<sup>45</sup> *Baṭīṭī. Aḥwāl Mulūk al-Tatār...* P. 65–66; *Atwood C. The Indictment of Ong Qa’an...* P. 287.

<sup>46</sup> *al-Nuwayrī. Nihāyat al-ārāb...* Vol. 27. P. 207.

to the rule of Altūn Khan of Ṭamghāj and paid tribute to him<sup>47</sup>. Like Nasawī, he reported that the Mongols were scorned and were known for their depravity, robbery, and adultery, until Chinggis Khan rebelled against Altūn Khan. Yet Jūzjānī also diverged from Nasawī's account in so far as he claimed that To'oril Khan was Chinggis Khan's father<sup>48</sup>. He also stated that the Mongols were initially defeated by Altūn Khan and that it was only after they repented of their evil ways and turned to God that they were given victory over their enemies<sup>49</sup>. Kushlū Khan of the Naiman has little bearing on the story of Jūzjānī, though he was most likely the second ruler of Mongolia identified by Jūzjānī. Kushlū Khan appears far more prominently in Jūzjānī's section on the Qara Khitai, contained in a separate chapter. These differences are enough to suggest that Jūzjānī was working from a different source to Nasawī, despite the superficial similarities.

Yet all of these sources were to be subsumed in the Persian tradition by 'Ala al-Dīn Juwaynī's, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā*, which the author wrote at the insistence of Möngke Khan. Unlike the earlier authors, Juwaynī was a member of the Mongol ruling class and could therefore draw upon «trustworthy Mongols» to relate their own history in greater detail<sup>50</sup>. He could also draw upon written sources, including engravings from the Orkhon Valley and, possibly, even the *yāsānāmah* scroll<sup>51</sup>. He observed that Chinggis Khan had ordered the young Mongols to learn Uyghur and to register their histories, which meant that there were more sources for him to use<sup>52</sup>. Like Jūzjānī, he included a description of To'oril Khan and the Kereyit, who he claimed Chinggis Khan served. But, in keeping with the new histories written at Möngke's court, Juwaynī's work focused more heavily on the Mongols' imperial founder and his family, whose victories over multiple allies qualified them to rule in their own right. His opening chapter on the *Condition of the Mongols Prior to the Institution of Government and the Rebellion of Changiz Khan* is followed by an *Account of the Rules that Changiz Khan Instituted after His Rebellion* and a chapter on the *Sons of Changiz Khan*. Only then did he move to document the history of Güchülüg and his persecution of the Muslims. In short, Juwaynī's account celebrated the benevolent rule of Chinggis Khan and his successors, most notably Ögödei. The latter account on Ögödei's generosity and good will towards the Muslims was simultaneously copied by Jūzjānī, in a sign that Mongol historiography was becoming far more organised and centralised<sup>53</sup>.

*The Secret History* and Juwaynī undoubtedly provide a much more detailed picture of early Mongol history than Nasawī, whose account of the somewhat fortuitous rise of Chinggis Khan bears little resemblance to the wise, charismatic, divinely inspired ruler that appears in the later sources. Yet his work does bear witness to an earlier memory of the Mongol past, in which the Mongols sought to justify their claim to power in competition with their neighbours, the Kereyit and the Naiman. This earlier narrative, like the descriptions of the Mongols as a poor,

<sup>47</sup> *Jūzjānī*. Ṭabaqāt-i Nāširī... Vol. 2. P. 98.

<sup>48</sup> *Jūzjānī*. Ṭabaqāt-i Nāširī... Vol. 2. P. 98.

<sup>49</sup> *Jūzjānī*. Ṭabaqāt-i Nāširī... Vol. 2. P. 99.

<sup>50</sup> *Juwaynī*. Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā... Vol. 1. P. 28.

<sup>51</sup> *Juwaynī*. Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā... Vol. 1. P. 17.

<sup>52</sup> *Juwaynī*. Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā... Vol. 1. P. 41.

<sup>53</sup> *Juwaynī*. Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā... Vol. 1. P. 14, 16, 29, 158; *Jūzjānī*. Ṭabaqāt-i Nāširī... Vol. 2. P. 154.

sinful, and divided people from the valley of Ergune-qun, were not entirely discarded by later histories. Rather, they were elaborated and redacted to fit more comfortably within the new narrative of Mongol history, which glorified the lineage of Chinggis Khan over all others.

#### Информация о статье

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**Автор:** Хоуп, Майкл — доктор истории, доцент Азиатской истории, Университет Ёнсе, Сеул, Корея, Orc ID 0000-0003-3454-5458, Scopus ID 56978986200, e-mail: michaelcachope@yahoo.com.au

**Заголовок:** A first draft of history: Nasawī's *Account of the Tatars* and Early Persian historiography of the Mongol Empire [Первый набросок истории: «Рассказ о татарах» ан-Насави и ранние персидские источники о Монгольской империи]

**Резюме:** Середина XIII в. стала поворотным моментом в историописании Монгольской империи. Взойдя на трон в 1251 г., Великий хан Мунке взял под контроль не только настоящее, но и прошлое, заказав обновление официальных придворных хроник. В наше время широко распространено мнение, что Мунке инициировал составление истории Чингисхана (правил в 1206–1227 гг.) и его преемника Угедея (правил в 1229–1241 гг.), известной как «Тайная история монголов». Основанная на ранних документах, «Тайная история» считается первым авторитетным источником, посвященным созданию Монгольского государства. Однако эта точка зрения может быть оспорена, поскольку существуют убедительные доказательства того, что первые персидские историки Монгольской империи основывались на еще более ранних свидетельствах, созданных при монгольском дворе. Содержание их отчетов позволяет предположить, что они были в значительной степени сформированы с использованием информации, полученной от каракитайских чиновников, которые либо бежали перед монгольской угрозой, либо, наоборот, были назначены в качестве администраторов в завоеванный монголами Иран. Таким образом, ранние персидские авторы предоставляют неофициальные свидетельства о том, как монголы помнили свое прошлое до того, как утвердилась его обновленная версия во время правления Мунке. В настоящем исследовании проанализирована одна из самых ранних персидских историй, — «Рассказ о проклятых татарах, начале их дела и об их родине», — написанная Шихаб ад-Дин Мухаммадом ан-Насави (ум. 1250), цель работы — определить происхождение ее монгольских источников и их итоговый вклад в историографию империи.

**Ключевые слова:** ан-Насави, Монгольская империя, Чингисхан, татары, историография, «Тайная история монголов», источниковедение

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**Author:** Hope, Michael — PhD in Asian Studies, Associate Professor of Asian History, Yonsei University, Underwood International College, Seoul, Korea, Orc ID 0000-0003-3454-5458, Scopus ID 56978986200, e-mail: michaelcachope@yahoo.com.au

**Title:** A First Draft of History: Nasawī's *Account of the Tatars* and Early Persian Historiography of the Mongol Empire

**Summary:** The middle of the thirteenth century was a pivotal moment in the historiography of the Mongol Empire. Having seized the throne in 1251, Möngke Khan also took control of its past, commissioning a number of new court histories. It is now widely believed that Möngke initiated the compilation of the history of Chinggis Khan (r. 1206–1227) and his successor Ögödei (r. 1229–1241), known as *The Secret History of the Mongols*. Drawing on earlier genealogies, proclamations, and correspondence, the *Secret History*

has been treated as the first authoritative account of the creation of the Mongol State. Yet this view may not be accurate as there is strong evidence that the first Persian histories of the Mongol Empire were informed by even earlier narrative histories from the Mongol court. The content of these accounts suggest that they were shaped heavily by the information of Qara Khitai officials who either fled, or were appointed to the early Mongol administration of Iran. These Persian authors provide anecdotal evidence of how the Mongols remembered their past before the new version promoted by Möngke took hold. The present study will analyse one of the earliest Persian histories, the *Account of the Accursed Tatars and the Beginning of their Rule* by Shihāb al-Dīn Nasawī (d. 1250), to determine the possible provenance of these Mongol histories and their contribution to the historiography of the empire.

**Keywords:** Nasawī, Mongol Empire, Chinggis Khan, Tatars, Historiography, Secret History of the Mongols.

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